

TOWEL HOLDER

Field of the Invention

[0001] This invention relates to golf accessories. In particular, this invention relates to a towel holder that also serves as a golf identification tag.

Background of the Invention

[0002] During a round of golf players traverse a course of 9 or 18 holes with a set of golf clubs carried in a golf bag. The golf bag holds not only the golf clubs, but also accessories used during the game of golf, such as golf balls, golf tees, and a towel for cleaning the golf balls and club heads. The towel is usually slung through a towel ring or buckle affixed to the outside of the golf bag, for easy access during play.

[0003] Many private golf courses provide identification tags for their members. The identification tag typically displays the name of the golf course, the name of the member, and a membership number. The tag is securely affixed to the outside of the member's golf bag and is large enough to allow golf course personnel to readily identify the member's golf from storage and the members on the course, for security reasons.

[0004] The towel is usually securely affixed to the bag and very difficult to remove easily and quickly, even though it must be removed from its holder and replaced many times over the course of a round of golf. Being subjected to considerable jostling as the golf bag is transported across the grounds, the towel is subject to inadvertent dislodgement from its holder, and therefore the towel is securely affixed to the golf bag.

[0005] Also, the towel is most conveniently carried on the most accessible position on the golf bag, but the most accessible position for the towel is also the most exposed position and therefore ideal for mounting the identification tag. However, storing the towel near the identification tag can conceal the tag and therefore reduce its effectiveness as a security feature. Members may tend to hang the identification tag on the towel ring 4 of the golf bag 2, and thus obscure the identification tag when there is a towel in the towel ring, which reduces the efficacy of security at the golf course.

Summary of the Invention

[0006] The present invention overcomes these disadvantages by providing a towel holder serving as well as an identification tag. The towel holder in the preferred embodiment displays all of the information required by the golf course, but in addition provides space for advertising and promotional messages that can be placed by the golf course or any authorized sponsor.

[0007] The towel holder is provided with a resilient membrane having at least one opposed flap cooperating with a compression member between which the towel is passed when stowed. This securely holds the towel against dislodgement during a round of golf, but effectively allows the golfer to access the towel during play by easily and quickly removing the towel from the holder of the invention.

[0008] The towel holder of the present invention thus provides all of the benefits of an identification tag and allows the tag and the towel to be affixed to the most accessible part of the golf bag, while ensuring that the member's identifying information is not obscured by the towel. At the same time, the towel holder holds the towel securely against dislodgement through whatever jostling motion the golf bag may be subjected to over the course of a round of golf, but also be conveniently available to the golfer for easy removal.

[0009] The additional space on the frame surrounding the towel holding portion provides an opportunity for the golf course to earn revenues through hosting tournaments and corporate events by providing a golf product that ensures that members see the advertising indicia every time they reach for their towel, resulting in successive "impressions" which increase the members' awareness of and familiarity with the advertised product or service.

[0010] The present invention thus provides a towel holder, comprising a frame and at least one resilient flap supported within the frame in opposition to a compression member, the flap being disposed substantially within the same plane as the compression point and there being a first spacing therebetween in a rest position, whereby when a towel is inserted between the resilient flap and the compression

member the flap flexes in the direction of insertion of the towel and compresses the towel against the compression member to trap the towel in the towel holder.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0011] In drawings which illustrate by way of example only a preferred embodiment of the invention,

[0012] Figure 1 is a perspective view of the golf towel holder of the invention.

[0013] Figure 2 is a front elevation of the towel holder of Figure 1, the opposite side being a mirror image thereof.

[0014] Figure 3 is a side elevation of the towel holder of Figure 1, the opposite side being a mirror image thereof.

[0015] Figure 4 is a perspective view of a further embodiment of the towel holder.

[0016] Figure 5 is a front elevation of the towel holder of Figure 4, the opposite side being a mirror image thereof.

[0017] Figure 6 is a side elevation of the towel holder of Figure 4, the opposite side being a mirror image thereof.

[0018] Figure 7 is a perspective view showing the manner of mounting a towel holder of the invention to a towel ring on a golf bag.

[0019] Figure 8 is a cross sectional side elevation of the towel holder of Figure 7.

[0020] Figure 9 is a perspective view of a golf bag showing the towel holder mounted thereto.

[0021] Figure 10 is a perspective view showing the manner of insertion of the towel into the towel holder.

[0022] Figure 11 is a cross sectional side elevation showing the towel lodged in the towel holder.

Detailed Description of the Invention

[0023] The towel holder 10 of the invention comprises a resilient portion for holding a towel 6, as described in greater detail below, and a rigidified portion forming a frame for holding the resilient portion and providing one or more surfaces upon which indicia can be displayed. The indicia would typically include the information that would be applied to an identifying tag, including the name of the golf course, a member identification number assigned to the member by the golf course, and optionally the name of the member. The indicia can also include advertising or promotional indicia, which may be represented in the form of a golf tournament or corporate event.

[0024] In the preferred embodiment illustrated in Figures 1 to 3, the rigidified portion of the towel holder 10 comprises a rigid frame 20, preferably comprising mating frame halves 22 and 24. The frame halves 22, 24 may be manufactured in any suitable fashion and out of any suitable material, for example molded from plastic. The frame 20 does not need to be completely rigid, as long as it is more rigid than the resilient membrane 32, and thus can be manufactured from a flexible material as long as it is designed for greater rigidity than the resilient membrane 32, described below. The frame 20 comprises various surfaces of the frame halves 22 and 24 upon which indicia may be displayed, including advertising panel 26, and also a strap bight or slot 28 and towel opening 30.

[0025] Sandwiched between the frame halves 22, 24 is a resilient membrane 32. The frame halves 22, 24 are bonded together over the resilient membrane 32 to thus retain the resilient membrane 32 securely in place, as illustrated in Figure 8. A towel holder 34 formed by a portion of the resilient membrane 32 is thus exposed through the towel opening 30 in the frame halves 22, 24. The towel holder 34 comprises at least two resilient flaps 36 disposed in opposition to one another. The flaps 36 lie substantially within the same plane and are spaced apart by a first spacing, which spacing increases when a towel 6 is disposed through the towel holder 34. In the preferred embodiment this is accomplished by providing at least one slit or opening 36a, preferably a pair of

orthogonal slits 36a and 36b which form four resilient flaps 36 for securely holding the towel 6.

[0026] In use, as shown in Figures 7 and 9 a strap 8 or other tying member may be fed through the strap slot 28 to secure the frame 20 to the towel ring 4 (or other convenient part) of the golf bag 2. The towel holder 10 is thus suspended from the towel ring 4, as illustrated in Figure 11. In an alternative embodiment it is also possible to affix the towel holder accessory 10 directly to the golf bag, either by inserting the towel ring 4 through the strap slot 28 before mounting it to the golf bag 2, or in any other suitable fashion. However, it is beneficial to be able to remove the towel holder 10 from the golf bag 2, since golf memberships change over time, membership systems change over time, and the golf course may wish to change sponsors or advertising from time to time. The towel holder 10 of the invention could be affixed to a golf bag 2 at the time of manufacture, or could alternatively be affixed to or manufactured as part of a golf power cart or golf pull cart (not shown).

[0027] The user inserts a towel in to the slits in the towel holder portion 34 of the membrane 32, as shown in Figure 10. The resilient flaps 36 created by the slits 36a, 36b grasp the towel 6 as shown in Figure 11, and prevent its dislodgement, because when flexed by the towel 6 the tips of the flaps 36 create a pair of opposed compression points that cooperate to grasp and hold the towel 6 securely in position. When jostled during movement of the golf bag 2 the weight of the towel 6 tends to pull against the direction of the flaps 36, and the frictional force of the towel 6 against the flaps 36 causes the flaps 36 to compress even harder against the towel 6, thereby increasing the resistance of the membrane 32 to dislodgement of the towel 6.

[0028] The towel 36 will remain lodged between the flaps 36 until sufficient force is applied to the towel 6 to overcome the resistance of the flaps 36, referred to herein as the "inversion threshold," and thus effectively invert the flaps 36 so that they extend in the direction of the hanging portion of the towel 6. After the flaps 36 have been so inverted, only frictional forces hold the towel 6 between the flaps 36 and the towel 6 can be readily removed from the towel holder 34 with little additional force.

[0029] The towel 6 is thus securely held by the resilient flaps 36, and at the same time because the position of the towel holder portion 34 of the membrane 32 is fixed within the frame 20, indicia (including identifying indicia and any advertising or promotional indicia) always remains unobscured by the towel 6.

[0030] In a further embodiment of the invention illustrated in Figures 4 to 6, the rigidified portion surrounding the towel holder comprises a unitary rigid plastic frame 40 having a strap slot 42 and a towel holder 44 comprising a resilient membrane 32. In this embodiment the resilient membrane 32 is cut to the shape of the towel holder 44 and bonded directly to the frame 40 using any suitable adhesive or other method. The towel holder 46 in this embodiment has slits 36a, 36b as in the previous embodiment, to produce resilient flaps 36, and operates in the same fashion as the previous embodiment. In the embodiment illustrated a thickened peripheral side edge 52 is provided, which further rigidifies the frame 40 (the frame 40 may be composed of a flexible material, as long as it is more rigid than the resilient membrane 32), and also provides a side face upon which indicia can be printed. As in the previous embodiment, the tips of the resilient flaps 36 provide opposed compression points which trap the towel 6, the resistance to dislodgement of the towel 6 thus increasing as the pulling force on the towel increases (for example as the golf bag is jostled during movement), up to the inversion threshold.

[0031] To remove the towel the user simply needs to pull the towel hard enough to reach the inversion threshold, and thereby overcome the resistance of the resilient flaps 36 against removal of the towel 6, which will then invert and allow the towel 6 to slip easily out of the towel holder 34. The resilient flaps 36 return to their rest position, which is substantially coplanar with one another, when the towel 6 is removed.

[0032] It is possible to provide spaces between the resilient flaps 36 that are larger than the slits 36a, 36b. It is also possible to provide only two opposed resilient flaps 36 in order to accomplish the function of providing cooperating compression points which trap a towel 6 inserted there between. It is even possible to provide a single resilient flap 36 in opposition to a rigid (i.e. substantially inflexible) member, which

will serve the same function of providing a set of opposed compression points for holding a towel 6. However, it has been found that providing four flaps 36 defined by orthogonal slits 36a, 36b, which may be die stamped or otherwise cut into the resilient membrane 32, is advantageous for both ease of manufacturing and maximum resistance to dislodgement.

[0033] In the embodiments shown in Figures 1 to 6 the advertising panel 26 is flush with the portion of the frame 20 surrounding the towel holder 34. It is also possible to recess the advertising panel 26, as in the embodiment shown in Figures 7 to 9, or to raise the surface of the frame 20 (not shown) to draw attention to the advertising.

[0034] Various embodiments of the present invention having been thus described in detail by way of example, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that variations and modifications may be made without departing from the invention. The invention includes all such variations and modifications as fall within the scope of the appended claims.